

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method and apparatus for distributing keys in a multicast domain is provided. In a secure multicast domain, a request to join a multicast group for a time period occurs. A key distributor which controls access to the multicast data group determines if the request will be accepted. If the request is accepted the key distributor assigns the member to a virtual channel, wherein each virtual channel is defined by a time period. A data group key is forwarded to the member as is a virtual channel key. The member can then receive and decode events from the data group on the assigned virtual channel.